

spirit, and they remind our wounded warriors that our Nation stands behind them.

Other military families have felt the pain of losing a loved one in battle. This Christmas, we hold them in our hearts. We lift them up in our prayers. And we are inspired by the example that many of these families have set by turning their grief into extraordinary acts of compassion and love.

One such inspiring example is the family of Army Specialist Michael Rodriguez of Knoxville, Tennessee. During his deployment in Iraq, Michael often wrote home to his family about the children he met on patrol. In April, Michael was killed by a suicide bomber. Now his family is honoring his memory by helping to collect school supplies for students in an Iraqi school for girls.

We are also grateful for Kirsten Yuhl-Torres of San Diego, California. In 2006, Kirsten lost her son, Sergeant Joseph Perry, in Iraq. To honor Joseph's memory, she started sending care packages and writing letters of support to other soldiers serving there. Kirsten says, "Joe was our only son, but now we have hundreds."

Our Nation is also inspired by Bob Lehmiller, whose son, Sergeant Mike Lehmiller, was killed in 2005 while serving in Afghanistan. To honor his son, Bob created Mike's Guardian Eagle Foundation. The foundation gives financial assistance to

military families who need extra help when their loved ones deploy or if they're wounded or killed on the field of battle.

All these families have already given so much to America, and yet they have found a way to give even more. We thank each of them. And we thank every one of our citizens who supports our troops with letters and donations or prayers.

At this time of year, we acknowledge that love and sacrifice can transform our world. The miracle of Christmas reminds us that God's grace is revealed in the humblest places. Two thousand years ago, the fullness of that grace was found in a tiny manger, and the life born that day changed our world forever. As Christmas approaches, Laura and I extend to all Americans our best wishes, and we hope every family is brought closer together during this season of reflection and rejoicing.

Thank you for listening, and Merry Christmas.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 a.m. on December 21 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 22. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 21, but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

## **Statement on Signing the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008** *December 26, 2007*

Today, I signed into law H.R. 2764, legislation that will fund the Federal Government within the reasonable and responsible spending levels I proposed—without raising taxes and without the most objectionable policy changes considered by the Congress. This law provides a down payment for the resources our troops need, without arbitrary timelines for withdrawal. The Congress

should quickly take action next year to provide the remainder of the funding needed by our troops.

I am disappointed in the way the Congress compiled this legislation, including abandoning the goal I set early this year to reduce the number and cost of earmarks by half. Instead, the Congress dropped into the bill nearly 9,800 earmarks that total

more than \$10 billion. These projects are not funded through a merit-based process and provide a vehicle for wasteful Government spending.

There is still more to be done to rein in Government spending. In February I will submit my budget proposal for fiscal year 2009, which will once again restrain spending, keep taxes low, and continue us on a path towards a balanced budget. I look forward to working with the Congress in the coming year to ensure taxpayer dollars are spent wisely.

Finally, this legislation contains certain provisions similar to those found in prior appropriations bills passed by the Congress that might be construed to be inconsistent with my Constitutional responsibilities. To avoid such potential infirmities, the executive branch will interpret and construe such provisions in the same manner as I have previously stated in regard to similar provisions.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,  
December 26, 2007.

## Remarks on the Death of Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan in Crawford, Texas *December 27, 2007*

Laura and I extend our deepest condolences to the family of Benazir Bhutto, to her friends, and to her supporters. We send our condolences to the families of the others who were killed in today's violence. And we send our condolences to all the people of Pakistan on this tragic occasion.

The United States strongly condemns this cowardly act by murderous extremists who are trying to undermine Pakistan's democracy. Those who committed this crime must be brought to justice. Mrs. Bhutto served her nation twice as Prime Minister,

and she knew that her return to Pakistan earlier this year put her life at risk. Yet she refused to allow assassins to dictate the course of her country.

We stand with the people of Pakistan in their struggle against the forces of terror and extremism. We urge them to honor Benazir Bhutto's memory by continuing with the democratic process for which she so bravely gave her life.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:55 a.m. at the Bush Ranch.

## Memorandum to the House of Representatives Returning Without Approval the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008" *December 28, 2007*

I am withholding my approval of H.R. 1585, the "National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008," because it would imperil billions of dollars of Iraqi assets at a crucial juncture in that nation's reconstruction efforts and because it would un-

dermine the foreign policy and commercial interests of the United States.

The economic security and successful reconstruction of Iraq have been top priorities of the United States. Section 1083 of H.R. 1585 threatens those key objectives.